



Australian Bureau of Statistics

1376.0 - Local Government and ABS (Newsletter), Jan 2006

Previous ISSUE Released at 11:30 AM (CANBERRA TIME) 10/01/2006

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About this newsletter

Local Government and ABS is a quarterly newsletter created by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) aimed at helping the Local Government Sector use statistics to assist with planning and other community servicing decisions.

The specific aims of this newsletter are to:

- Help you easily find information on the ABS website and explain the structure of the ABS website;
- Provide direct electronic links to statistical series of use to local government. Electronic links are coloured and underlined and can be activated using the mouse button;
- Explain statistical terms to help make sense of more complex data;
- Provide a central contact point where you can provide your views and suggestions as to how the ABS can better assist local government.

This is a free newsletter and we encourage you to forward it to others and post it on your bulletin board. Anyone is welcome to receive Local Government and ABS.

To subscribe:

send an email to rex.porter@abs.gov.au with "subscribe Local Government and ABS" in the subject line.

If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter:

send an email to rex.porter@abs.gov.au with "unsubscribe Local Government and ABS" in the subject line.

To find this newsletter on the ABS Website:

- Select **News and Media** from the main menu at the top or bottom of the screen.
- At the next page choose **ABS Newsletters**.
- Then choose the appropriate edition under **Local Government and ABS**.

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Full range of electronic ABS data from website is now free of charge

You now have access to the full range of electronic ABS data free of charge including :

- electronic publications (PDF and HTML based content);

- Census Community Profiles down to Collection District level;
- time series spreadsheets; and
- other spreadsheets and data cubes.

For further information please see the web page <http://www.abs.gov.au/about/pricing> ; contact the ABS National Information and Referral Service (NIRS) on 1300 135 070; or email client.services@abs.gov.au.

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Nature and content of 2006 Population Census

The ABS is preparing to undertake the Population Census on August 6 2006. The topics that will be included, and the procedures to be used are discussed in the publication :

2006 Census of Population and Housing : Nature and Content (cat. no. 2008.0)

The procedures have been determined after evaluation of the 2001 Census data and processes as well as extensive public consultation.

Topic related changes from the 2001 Census include:

- the introduction of questions on need for assistance, unpaid work and dwelling Internet connection.
- A question on the number of children ever born will once again be asked, in line with the 10 year cycle for this question.
- Revisions to the labour force questions

There are revised approaches to collection and coding of age, industry and tenure type related questions. A new experimental level of geographic output called Meshblocks will be trialed in 2006.

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Use of Information Technology on farms

There is new data about the use of information technology (Computer or Internet) on farms for 2003-04 in the publication:

Use of Information Technology on Farms, Australia (cat. no. 8150.0)

Among the main features are:

Of the 130,526 farms in Australia in 2003-04, with an estimated value of agricultural operations (EVAO) of \$5,000 or more:

55% used a computer as part of their business operations; and

47% used the Internet as part of their business operations.

At the regional level (Statistical Division), the proportion of farms using a computer as part of their business operations varied from 81% in the Pilbara region of Western Australia to 40% in the Mid-North Coast of New South Wales.

Generally, the more remote areas of Australia recorded higher proportions of farms using the Internet. The proportions ranged from 77% in the North West of Queensland to 33% in the Ovens-Murray region of Victoria.

For further information please contact :

Nicholas Deverson in the ABS Perth Office on (08) 9360 5323, or by email : nick.deverson@abs.gov.au

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ABS Information consultants can provide you with customised statistical reports for your area

ABS offers a professional statistical information consultancy service. This Australian wide service

specialises in custom made social and economic reporting for your local government area. For further details phone our consultants on 1300 135 070.

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What's happening in Local Government Finance?

Collections

Electronic forms for the **annual** data collection, conducted cooperatively by the ABS and the Department of Local Government and/or Local Government Grants Commission in each state, have now been dispatched for all jurisdictions. Whilst return dates are different in each state, data for the earlier states have started to be received by the ABS via the Department of Local Government and/or Grants Commission.

The main focus of the Local Government Statistics Unit (LGSU) over the next few months will be processing the data received in time for use in the ABS National Accounts. Given the tight deadlines involved, the LGSU encourages all councils to return their forms to their respective Department of Local Government/ Grants Commission at the earliest possible time. To assist in the quality assurance processes the LGSU performs on the data, the ABS would also encourage all councils to complete the relevant comments section of the form to report any unusual activity which has occurred.

The LGSU has completed the **quarterly** survey of financial information for the September quarter cycle. The letters requesting the December quarter data were dispatched early this quarter (8 December 2005) due to the Christmas break. The due date for councils to return the completed form is **11 January, 2006**. Once again the form will request only a restricted range of data items but seeks a prompt response in order to ensure the financial activity of local government is accurately represented in Australia's National Accounts which are prepared on a quarterly basis. As always ABS personnel are available to assist councils in completing the form in situations where requirements are unclear.

Other Developments

At times we need to look at what we are doing and review if everything is still in line with what our users need. The LGSU is planning to review its quarterly Local Government Finance collection early next year and revisit stakeholder requirements. We will look at data items collected, form design, sample review, selection rotation policy, provider load and data quality. This will ensure that the survey remains relevant and is responsive to user needs.

Contacts

Director: Sean Thompson [sean.thompson@abs.gov.au] (07) 3222 6257

Assistant Director: Peter Ball [peter.ball@abs.gov.au] (07) 3222 6404

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Changes to release of regional population estimates

The ABS is making some changes to the 2004-05 issue of Regional Population Growth, Australia, (cat. no. 3218.0), which is due for release on 23 February 2006.

These changes are aimed at streamlining the production of the publication to ensure that the 30 June 2005 estimated resident populations of all Local Government Areas (LGAs) and Statistical Local Areas (SLAs) in Australia are available for use by the beginning of March 2006, as has been requested by various state, territory and local governments.

- Statistical Local Area (SLA) tables for Australia will be removed from the Acrobat version of the publication. However, the SLA data will still be available from the ABS website for free as an Excel spreadsheet and SuperTable datacube. These products will be released at the same time as the publication. The publication will provide a clear reference to how to access this data from the electronic product Regional Population Growth, Australia, Electronic Delivery, cat. no. 3218.0.55.001 on the ABS website. The Acrobat version of the publication will retain the LGA and Statistical Districts table. A Statistical Division table for the states and a Statistical Subdivision summary for the Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory will also be included.

- The New Zealand data will be removed from the publication resulting in a name change from Regional Population Growth, Australia and New Zealand to Regional Population Growth, Australia. The publication will provide notes on how to access the NZ data and commentary which is now freely available from the Statistics New Zealand website: <http://www.stats.govt.nz/products-and-services/info-releases/subnat-pop-est-info-releases.htm>

If you have any questions or concerns please contact:

Heather Latz, Assistant Director, Regional Population Unit on (08) 8237 7484;
or Katie Inglis on (08) 8237 7355.

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Links to previous issues of Local Government and ABS

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Newsletter contact details

This newsletter is one way to help improve communication between the ABS and the Local Government Sector. New ABS initiatives to assist local government organisations will be announced in this newsletter as they evolve. We would like your views and suggestions about this newsletter so that it remains useful and assists you to understand and use ABS statistics. Please email comments to rex.porter@abs.gov.au, or by telephone on (08) 8237 7416.

This page last updated 5 April 2007

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